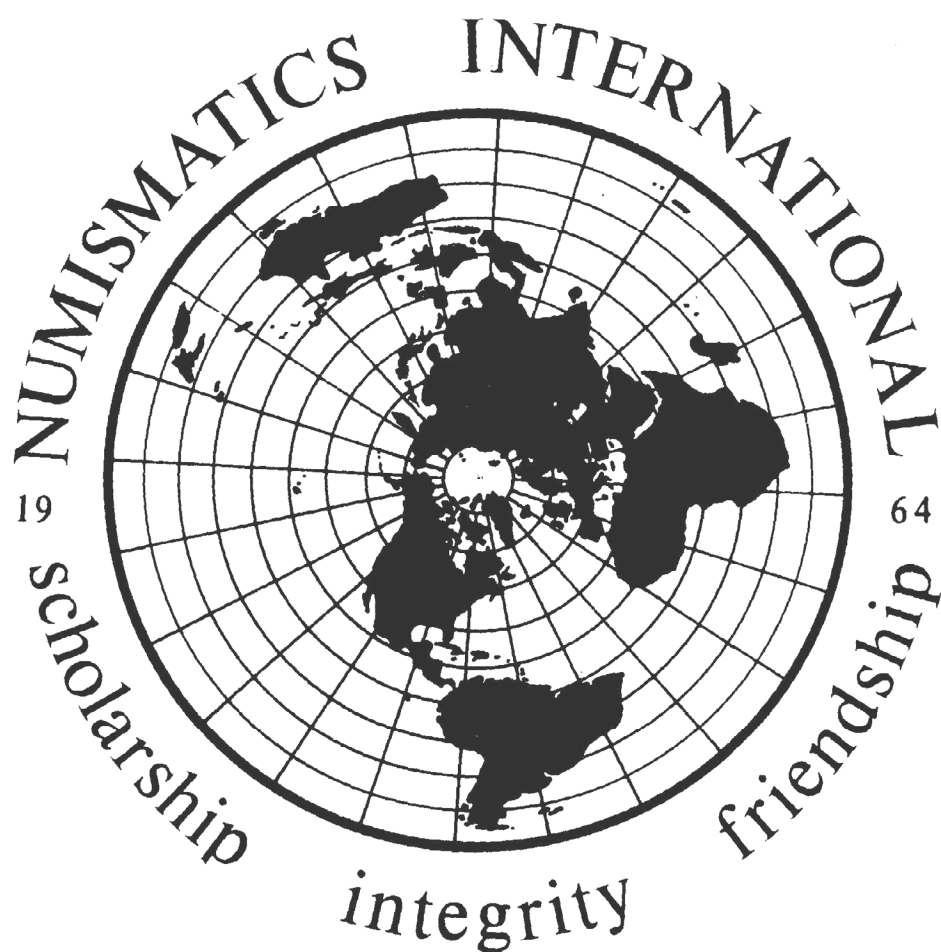


NI Bulletin

A Publication of Numismatics International Inc.

Volume 43 No. 1



January 2008

\$2.00

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Ross Schraeder

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Howard A. Daniel III

P.O. Box 989 Deltaville, VA 23043-0989

e-mail: HADaniel3@msn.com

Book Orders: Elmore Scott: NIBooks@tx.rr.com

NUMISMATICS INTERNATIONAL

e-mail: johnvan@grandecom.net

Website: <http://www.numis.org>

Discussion Group:

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Correspondence should be directed to those persons and addresses above for departments indicated. All other correspondence should be mailed direct to NUMISMATICS INTERNATIONAL, P.O. BOX 570842, DALLAS, TX 75357-0842.

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From the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of the 43rd Volume of the *NI Bulletin*. Our lead article in this edition comes from Gregory Brunk, "Latin Abbreviation Countermarks of the Roman Legions." As this edition was mailed together with the December 2007 edition I elected to publish the entire article in one bulletin instead of dividing into two parts, even though it nearly fills a single edition. We also have an article from the Bank of Japan, another one in the series on Japanese monetary history, the first with reference to western currency; I hope you find it interesting. Howard Ford's article, "Coins for a Monk Named Joseph," enlightens us with a bit of history.

Herman Blanton



Book News

Numismatic International's latest book, *An Introduction to Religious Medals* by Bob Forrest was published in the fall of 2007. The 200+ page book is hard-bound with dust jacket in 8.5 x 11 inch format. It includes hundreds of line drawings, charts, tables, background information, etc. The book consists of table of contents, introduction, thirty-four chapters, list of abbreviations used and several indices. Individual chapters provide detailed information on subjects such as the Virgin Mary, Face of Christ, Sacred Hearts, Symbols of the Eucharist & Passion, Lamb of God, the Nativity, the Three Kings, Images of Christ, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the Rosary, Icons & Paintings and many more.

The book is available for purchase directly from NI. Contact Elmore Scott at NI, PO Box 570842, Dallas, TX 75357-0842 or by email at NIBooks@tx.rr.com.

ISSN: 0197-3088 Copyright 2007

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Latin Abbreviation Countermarks of the Roman Legions

Gregory G. Brunk NI #749

Many coins countermarked by various Roman legions have appeared on the numismatic market in recent years, probably found by metal detectors. Most of them are exceedingly worn and are impossible to identify unless you already have seen the countermarks before in better condition and can recognize them as being the same types. These countermarks usually consist of hard-to-read abbreviations or monograms in rectangles. Complicating matters further, such countermarks often are found on *ancient counterfeit* Roman coins worn almost smooth. The stamps usually are illustrated as line drawings, even in many specialized references, because half a dozen specimens may need to be examined closely to piece together the details of any particular stamp.

The writer recently examined a group of about thirty pieces, which will be used in explaining the nature of these stamps and how to identify them. All the coins in the group except two seem to be *ancient counterfeits* of imperial Roman aes (sestertius, dupondius, as or semis denominations). Most of the pieces are very light weight. Even allowing for what would have been lost in cleaning, some of them appear to have only a third of their official weight. They are just circular planchets with little or no discernible designs or legends.

The outline of the emperor's bust that appears on most first-century Roman imperial coins could be recognized on only four of the specimens, many of which are cast. Just two pieces could be identified with certainty. One seems to be a genuine sestertius of Augustus, the first Roman Emperor, while the other probably is a genuine semis of Augustus. The obverse of both of them shows a moneyer's name and initials around SC, while the reverse is AUGUSTUS TRIBUNE POTEST in an oak wreath. The photos illustrate the best specimens from the group. The thirty coins have six basic types of countermarks: (1) **AVG**. (2) **IMP** as conjoined letters; the coin in the upper right corner of the plate is an example. (3) Helmet in shield; the best example in the hoard occurs on the coin in the upper left corner of the plate. (4) **TICA**. (5) At least four varieties of cruder countermarks that are seen upon close inspection to be versions of **TICA**, including one that reads **ITCA**. Some of these cruder **TICA** stamps may be *ancient counterfeit countermarks*, perhaps by the same forgers who counterfeited the coins in ancient times. (6) A large, rectangular countermark appears in the center of many of the reverses, but is so worn on all the specimens that it could not be described any further. An example of this countermark occurs on the right most coin in the second row of the plate.

Characteristics and Purposes of Legion Countermarks

This article will discuss what is known about the legion countermarks that appear on *Roman imperial coins*, their history and how to identify them. The first thing to recognize is that most of the countermarks found on coins excavated in legion camps have a standard form. *They usually consist of relief letters within a rectangle or a square just like nineteenth-century silversmith hallmarks.* Their legends are initials, often presented as conjoined letters, and less often as monograms. A typical example of a conjoined abbreviation on one of the coins is **IMP** for *imperator* (emperor)

consisting of an M whose left portion is the letter I and whose right portion is the letter P.

Scholars once claimed that most legion countermarks had a political purpose in providing legitimacy for pretenders before they could strike their own coins. Later research based on the systematic examination of numerous specimens radically lessened the likelihood that this hypothesis is correct. Studies of the weights of countermarked and non-countermarked coins have shown that most ancient countermarks had an explicitly economic purpose, and their imperial abbreviations just served as convenient signs of authority.

At least four economic purposes for countermarking coins were prominent in ancient times: (1) Countermarking could allow a coin to circulate in a different area than originally intended. Such a stamp gave local legitimacy to coins issued elsewhere. (2) Countermarking could change the official value of a coin, perhaps by increasing the value of older, heavier-weight coins after a period of inflation. (3) Countermarking could be used to extend the circulation of worn minor coins—or their counterfeits—by giving them a mark showing their official status. This was done when no local mint could supply newly coined pieces. (4) Countermarking might be used to designate and sanction specimens meeting a minimum weight standard if a coin series was extensively counterfeited.

While papers on ancient countermarked coins have been published since the 1730s, and many articles were published on them during the late nineteenth century, much of the early literature was highly speculative. Why was this case? For a long time researchers could only examine a few examples of any particular series of countermarked coins, and had to reach their conclusions based on very scanty and often distorted evidence. One of the most influential papers in the field of ancient countermarks was written by Colin Kraay (1956) fifty years ago. He advocated their statistical study and concentrated on three issues. What types of coins do particular countermarks appear upon? This provides a clue to their purpose. What is the sequence of overstrikes of countermarks? This indicates their relative chronology. How are countermarked coins dispersed spatially in site finds? This indicates their geographical origin.

Writers who believed countermarks are political references that supported the power-seeking aims of particular individuals viewed such abbreviations as **AVG** and **TIB** in this light. The coins so countermarked were thought to have been authorized by Augustus and Tiberius to help legitimize their authority. Instead, the abbreviation of an emperor's name and titles in a countermark often seems to refer to a specific weight standard or to a specific coinage issue, perhaps of a previous ruler. Such countermarks as **TIB** may mean: "As good as a coin of Tiberius," rather than indicating Tiberius was the authority for their stamping. The countermarked coin was then sanctioned to remain in circulation and to be accepted at a specific value for taxation and other official purposes.

Specific varieties of such stamps usually appear on particular denominations of aes coins meeting a minimum weight standard. Similar coins without countermarks would not have had official sanction, and would have been worth less than their

countermarked cousins. As David MacDowall (1966: 130) summarized why countermarks referring to the Emperor Augustus appear stamped over those referring to his successor, Tiberius, and vice-versa: "(T)he affixing of a countermark gave the coin the status of some other issue, and the new status could be recognized from the countermark. In any restriction or withdrawal of currency the countermarked coin would enjoy the status not of its original issue, but of the issue to which it had been assimilated."

Some coins probably were countermarked before being distributed as pay to soldiers so they would be accepted by local merchants at a fixed value. Or a small fee may have been charged to locals to get their coins countermarked at the various legion fortresses, and in that way define their value. In turn, this explains why apparently counterfeit countermarks are so common, but without systematic evidence about the weights of both stamped and unstamped pieces and information about find sites we can do little more than speculate about a specific countermark's purpose. Nevertheless, the statistical analysis of finds has allowed researchers to pinpoint some of the legion fortresses where certain types of countermarks were struck, determine the sequence of issues, and make a strong case for their general economic nature.

An example of the importance of this sort of research concerns the many countermarked specimens that have been excavated in German legion camps. Sixty years ago Michael Grunwald (1946) argued that **TIB** and **TIB AVG**—which are found in abundance in these camps—should be interpreted as politically motivated. He believed they implied that a revolt unknown to written history had occurred in 6 BC as the Rhine legions supported Tiberius against the Emperor Augustus. This political hypothesis nicely fit the known evidence since at about that time Augustus and Tiberius had a falling out for an unrecorded reason, but as the numismatic evidence accumulated, some of these countermarks were discovered on coins of Augustus minted after 6 BC. That discredited Grunwald's political thesis (Buttrey 1970).

During the reign of Augustus, who was emperor until AD 14, the payment of soldiers in German legion camps changed from silver coins to aes. When this happened it became important to keep minor coins in circulation long after they had become worn beyond recognition. Indeed, Kraay (1956) estimated that the aes coinage would become so worn as to need reconfirmation by countermarking thirty to fifty years after its issue. This is the reason why so many of the early and mid-first century aes coins found in frontier hoards are countermarked, and sometimes are countermarked many times in successive revaluations.

Much research exists on coins discovered in northern fortresses. One of the first studies reported on coins from Novaesium. Since it was published in the early twentieth century the coins of a number of other camps have been analyzed, and major works have been published on countermarked coins found in such forts as Nijmegen, Oberhausen, and Vindonissa (Kraay 1962 for example). Over 6,000 coins were found at the latter site in Switzerland, and 900 of them are countermarked. Kraay (1956) also was able to use data on the geographical disposition of finds to identify the varieties of stamps that were issued by the legions at Nijmegen, Neuss, Mainz, Strasbourg Argentorate, and Vindonissa. Other varieties of countermarks have been assigned to fortresses in various provinces, such as Cauntum in Pannonia.

If an economic purpose was paramount, countermarking would have been appropriate in places where the central government was unable to produce sufficient coins to satisfy local demand. In fact, the parts of the Empire where countermarked Roman aes coins usually are found were at the periphery where most of the troops were stationed and there were no official mints. Many of the coins that circulated during the first and early second century at the frontiers were light-weight and often cast imitations called "lime coins." That is a reference to the fortified boundaries of the empire, which included Hadrian's Wall in Britain and the German fortresses. Such crude pieces were often countermarked.

Types of Legion Countermarks

Countermarked Roman aes coins have received considerable attention in the last few years as a number of collections of them have been published (Martini 2003 for example). The writer has reviewed most of the literature on these countermarks; and although the following list does not note every sort of countermark that is associated with the Roman legions (since the interpretation of some monograms is disputed), it records most of the types of countermarks that are found on *Roman imperial aes coins*. It is particularly useful for readers to recognize that legion countermarks usually consist of strings of letters, sometimes conjoined and often very hard to read.

Not all ancient countermarks in rectangles are issues of the Roman legions, but many of them are legion issues. So if you encounter a rectangular countermark in Latin letters on a worn or counterfeit ancient copper alloy coin that seems to portray an imperial bust, the countermark may well be a legion issue. There are, however, some exceptions to this rule. Howgego (1985) lists a few countermarks of this sort on the "Greek Imperial" civic coins of the eastern Roman Empire. A few similar types of countermarks of this sort also are found on Roman provincial coins of Hispania and Gaul. They are not common and many of them are listed only in highly specialized references, but see Brunk (1974) for some of them.

As a way to make these countermarks easier to interpret, their letters are split here according to the abbreviated names and titles. Why? *Because you often need to know exactly what you may encounter before observing it in order to read a worn stamp correctly.* The letters actually run together in most ancient countermarks, and what is indicated here as **TIB IMP AVG** usually appears as **TIBIMPAVG**, although varieties occasionally have dots between the abbreviations. Sometimes the various letters also are attached to form a single conjoined letter or occasionally a complicated and hard-to-decipher monogram.

Imperial Titles as Countermarks

The highest Roman administrators could hold a number of titles. Some of these were hereditary within the royal family, while others might be renewed from time to time. When these titles appear on coins they may allow dating to the exact year and sometimes to the very month of an issue. Augustus, for example, was IMP XX in AD 11, but none of the legion countermarks is that specific.

While some of the **AVG** stamps certainly refer to the first Emperor Augustus, unless a statistical analysis can be undertaken it is uncertain who issued the numerous sorts of these generic stamps because they could refer to various emperors and sometimes to other Roman officials since "Augustus," "Imperator," etc., became formal titles. Indeed, most abbreviations of such titles were applied at numerous fortresses at different times. The **CAES** monogram is a notable exception, and was used mostly during the early years of Tiberius' rule by troops stationed in Lower Germany (Kraay 1956).

AVG = Augustus

IMP = Imperator (Emperor)

AV C = Augustus Caesar

M or **MP** (Conjoined versions)

CAESAR

IMP AVG = Imperator Augustus

CAE = Caesar

PP = Pater Patriae (Father of the Country)

CAES = Caesar (Monogram)

PvP (Retrograde of the above?)

Tiberius (AD 14-37)

Tiberius Claudius Nero often used TI AVG and other abbreviations on his coins. Many of the stamps listed below probably were issued during his reign, while others may have been issued later and indicate "As good as a coin of Tiberius." Some of them also are retrograde; they are mirror images that resulted from a stamp maker cutting normal letters, rather than the reversed letters that were needed to produce normal letters when impressed onto a coin. There are many varieties of most stamps, and particularly notable is an oval rather than rectangular **TIB** (see the plate of drawings of reconstructed countermarks from Colin Kraay's *Die Munzfunde von Vindonisse*). Nevertheless, all stamps are shown here in rectangles for convenience. A specific abbreviation and style of stamp apparently indicated to its contemporaries that a coin had been assigned a particular value by a certain legion fortress.

T AVG

TI IMP

TIB IM

T IMP

TIB

TIB IMP

T I A

TIB AVG

TIB IMP AVG

TI AV

TIB AV IMP

TIBER C

Caligula (AD 37-41)

Caius Caesar was the son of Germanicus, and his nickname Caligula was derived from the miniature legion uniform he wore as a child, including the half boot called a *caliga*. He was named Tiberius' successor, and at first showed promise as Emperor, but became hated because of his debauchery and was assassinated by the Praetorian Guard. After his death the Senate decreed a *damnatio memoriae* on the despised emperor and ordered his aes coins to be melted. While the legions must have countermarked coins during Caligula's rule, there are no self-obvious stamps of the

period, and the countermarks used during his reign apparently were general titles or references to previous coin issues of Augustus or Tiberius.

No official would have used a countermark indicating "As good as a coin of Caligula" after his assassination, but there are, oddly enough, some coins of Caligula that were countermarked **TI·C·A** during the rule of Claudius. These **TI·C·A** countermarks are distinctive in showing respect for the dead emperor by stamping in a way that did not deface Caligula's portrait. Some of them probably were issued by the XIII Gemina, which was stationed in Lower Germany and had been the favorite of Caligula (Martini 1980). Until recently this type of countermark was rarely encountered, although the writer has seen an example on an as of Caligula, and a number of **TI C A** stamps appear in this hoard on coins that are much too worn to be identified to emperor

Claudius (AD 41-54)

Tiberius Claudius Drusus was proclaimed Emperor by the Pretorian Guard after the murder of Caligula, and shortly afterwards was confirmed by the Senate. He often used TI CLAUDIVS and other abbreviations on his coins. While some of the abbreviations in the following countermarks also would have been appropriate for Tiberius, the countermarks generally appear on light weight or counterfeit coins of Claudius. So these countermarks must be from the reign of Claudius or later. The TIB in some of these stamps is a conjoined letter that at first appears to be only a B, but its vertical stroke is seen upon close inspection to also represent I and T.

IMP CA	TB CLAV MP	TIB C A IMP
T C AV IM	TI AV	TIB C AV F
T C IM	TIB CL IMP	TIB C AV IM
T C IMP	TI C A	TIB C AV IMP
T C P A	TI C IM	TIB C AVG
T CA	TI CL	TIB C IMP
TB C IMP	TI CLAV IMP	TIB CL AVC
TB CLAV	TIB C A	TIB CLAV

Provincial Officials, Towns, Etc.

Many of the miscellaneous countermarks found in small numbers on Roman aes probably were issued during the early and middle first century. A few of these countermarks clearly are the initials of Roman military officers. Most notable are the countermarks sometimes attributed to P. Quinctilius Varus, who commanded the three legions annihilated by the Germans at the battle of Teutoburg Forest in AD 9. That ten percent loss of total military strength forced Augustus to withdraw from the Roman territories between the Rhine and the Elbe.

A number of varieties of the countermarks of Lucius Apronius also have been found in legion camps. Apronius was a commander in Germany in AD 14 and reportedly was part of the attempt to retrieve the standards that had been lost when Varus was defeated. He later became an official in North Africa, and could have stamped coins there as well.

A large number of initial countermarks—often from circular stamps—are found on coins also having the standard, rectangular types of legion countermarks. The best guess is that these initials in circles usually indicate generic titles such as Provincial Treasurer or refer to particular Roman officials. But some probably indicate towns and only are associated with legion countermarks because the troops used coins that also had been validated by towns in their area (Brunk 1980).

CPA, for example, is perhaps for Colonia Patricia in Spain, and **CA** may indicate Colonia Agrippina (modern Cologne). Many of these stamps are crude and hard to read monograms. **CREVAT** is part retrograde and part upside down, while the interpretation is far from certain for **GERMANIC**. Some of the stamps listed below as being in rectangles actually are in circles or shaped indentations, but their shape often is not certain. Many early references only described particular marks without providing an illustration because most of these marks are not particularly common and a writer had not seen enough examples to produce an accurate line drawing.

ALAR	CONSTI	LVALERIA	QVAR
AMR	COS	M	RC
AP	CPA	MA	SE
APRON	CR	MD	SK
APRONI	CREVAT	NE	TBC
L APRON	CV	NOM	TCPA
ARAT	CVAL	PAM	TIVL
AV	DAC	PDD	TIVM
AVC	DAR	PI	TMAIM
AVL	FAN	PNR	TPRC
B	FAT	PR	TRAVI
BAC	GAL	PRC	TVF
BPV	GERMANIC	PVBLI	VA
CA	IMPSER	QCASPR	VAL
CAA	INRAVG	QCP	VAR
CAC	IQCK	QSP	VICI

CAG

LC

QVA

VICIN

CCARN

LCC

QVAL

A few other stamps are encountered often enough in excavations that they may be legion issues. Wheels of four to ten spokes are found on coins in Rhineland camps. **D/D** for *Decreto Decurionum* (Decree of the Council) often occurs on Spanish civic coins and occasionally Roman imperial aes coins of Nemausus.

Nero? (AD 54-68)

The most commonly encountered Roman countermark **NCAPR** usually is attributed to Nero, who did not mint any aes coins for the first ten years of his rule. It occurs on sestertii of the first three emperors and their family members, but not on coins of the despised Caligula (AD 37-41) because the Senate had decreed his aes be melted. Unlike many legion countermarks—which sometimes have blundered or weak letters—all the **NCAPR** stamps are well made. They often are deliberately placed in a flat area of a coin's field so as not to disfigure a coin, also unlike many legion countermarks. Furthermore, **NCAPR** is almost never found with other countermarks, which is very unlike the known legion countermarks. In fact, coins with **NCAPR** only rarely have been excavated in legion camps, and they must have had a quite different origin than the frontier fortresses.

The usual interpretation of the countermark is *Nero Caesar Augustus Probavit* (Approved by Nero). A more creative explanation was proposed a century ago and contends the abbreviation indicates *Nero Claudius Augustus Populo Romano* (From Nero to the People of Rome) or something similar. That implies the coins were distributed to the poor of the city of Rome as part of the imperial welfare system. *The countermark is quite popular with modern counterfeiters, and many modern casts of worn Roman coins have been seen with fake versions of NCAPR.* There also is a much rarer, genuine countermark **NERCPP** for *Nero Caesar Pater Patriae*.

General Guarantees

Some generic countermarks may have been applied during the reign of Nero, but it also has been suggested that they were used as late as the reign of Trajan in the early second century. Not enough examples are known to be certain. These stamps are general terms that do not indicate a particular ruler. They usually occur on reasonably good quality ancient counterfeits of Roman imperial coins and are mostly from Western Europe. They may or may not be legion issues. Not enough examples have been excavated to be certain.

AS is found only on light-weight dupondii, and devalued them by fifty percent. **DVP** only is found on light-weight sestertii and devalued them by fifty percent. Likewise, some light-weight, counterfeit as denomination coins are countermarked **S** for semis.

AS = As

PROB = Probatum (Approved)

BON = Bonum (Good)

PRO

BO

ROB (Blundered Version)

DVP = Dupondius

S = Semis

DV

The Civil Wars (AD 68-69)

Although the vast majority of legion countermarks refer to Tiberius or Claudius, a few countermarks were issued after Nero's death during the subsequent succession crisis. Some authorities think these patriotic countermarks were used during the Civil Wars of AD 68-69 by the Gallic rebel Vindex to show support for the plan to return Rome to a republican form of government. Others believe they were issued earlier. In any event, they are known in hoards of legion-countermarked coins and they are versions of *Senatus Populusque Romanus* (The Senate and People of Rome).

PR

SPQR

SPQ

SRP

Galba (AD 68-69)

Servius Sulpicius Galba was proclaimed emperor by the Spanish legions on the death of Nero, but was not well received in Rome. Galba was assassinated by Otho after the proclamation of Vitellius by the legions of Lower Germany. His name also is known as a legion-style countermark in Greek letters.

GALBA

GAL CA

IMP GAL

Otho (AD 69)

M. Salvius Otho at first supported Galba in hopes of being named his successor. When that did not occur he had Galba killed and ruled for a short time in AD 69. Vitellius quickly defeated Galba's forces, and the latter committed suicide.

IMP OTHO

OTHO IMP

Vitellius (AD 69)

Aulus Vitellius was made commander of the troops of Lower Germany by Galba, and those legions proclaimed Vitellius emperor in early January of AD 69. He ruled for only six months, being defeated by Vespasian in July.

VITE Monogram

Vespasian (AD 69-79) and Perhaps Titus (AD 79-81)

T. Flavius Vespasianus was one of the commanders of the forces that invaded Britain during the reign of Claudius, and in AD 67 he commanded the troops that suppressed

the Jewish revolt. Vespasian was proclaimed emperor by the Alexandrian and Danubian legions in July of AD 69. The latter invaded Italy and defeated Vitellius, making Vespasian the ultimate winner of the civil wars. He used IMP CAES VESP AVG and other titles on coins. His son Titus (79-81) used similar titles with the addition of a letter T as in IMP T CAES VESP AVG.

Some countermarks on aes coins appear to have a weakly engraved, conjoined TV at the beginning of a countermark, while others do not seem to include the T. This may mean some of the countermarks were issued by Titus, but that is not certain. The countermarks **IMP VES**, **IMP VESP** and **IMP VESP AVG** also are known on Roman Republican and Roman provincial silver coins of Ephesos. They are some of the few Roman countermarks encountered on silver coins.

IMP VESP

VESPA Monogram

Trajan (AD 98-117)

Marcus Ulpius Trajanus added four provinces to the empire, but at the end of his reign a number of Eastern provinces rebelled and Trajan was planning to invade Parthia at the time of his death. In AD 116 he consolidated his forces around the city of Antioch, and a number of those legions stamped what were by then century-old coins—see below. After the reign of Trajan it is uncommon to find coins with legion countermarks, although some minor coins of Judea and Samaria minted until at least the middle 130s were stamped by the X Fretensis, whose stamp also is known on a Bythnian provincial coin of Marcus Aurelius (161-180).

TRAIAN Monogram

Countermarks of Specific Legions

Most legion countermarks are abbreviations indicating the emperors Tiberius and Claudius, but a few refer to specific legions. These usually consist of a legion's number, but sometimes more than one legion had the same number. There also are a few symbolic countermarks. The XII Fulminata (meaning thunderbolt) apparently used a lightning bolt countermark. This sort of symbolic countermark is highly unusual on imperial aes coins, but such countermarks often occur on civic coins, as do stamps in Greek and occasionally other languages (see Howegego 1985).

The 10th Gemina moved from Spain to Upper Pannonia during the reign of Nero. The coins it had used in Spain were minted at Lugdunum (modern Lyon), and their types would have been unfamiliar to the people of the Danube. After their move the 10th Gemina countermarked the good quality coins of Nero in its possession that had been minted at Lugdunum with a **Bar over large X** in a square depression.

Half a century later the 10th Fretensis used a **Bar over small X** countermark, which mostly appears on coins of Judea and Samaria, rather than on imperial aes. The legion also used a galley countermark, which referred to its victory in support of Agrippa against Pompey in the naval battle of the Straits of Sicily (*Fretum Siculum*) in 36 BC,

and was the source of the legion's name. Some of its countermarks were very poorly executed, and often have been described as LXF above a galley. Close inspection indicates, instead, that the oars of what was interpreted as a galley actually are the ridge of bristles that runs down the back of a wild boar. A number of the countermarks listed below are found on early first-century bronze coins and were issued by Trajan's legions when they were encamped close to the city of Antioch in AD 116 (Brunk 1980).

Legio II

LII

Legio III Cyrenaica

LIIC

Legio VI Ferrata

LVIF

Legio VI Victrix

Club over LVI

Legio X Fretensis

LX

LXF above Boar

LXF above Boar and Dolphin

Bar over small X

XF

Legio X Gemina

Bar over large X

Legio XI Claudia

XCIIIM

Legio XII Fulminata

FVLM

XII

LXII

LXIIF

Legio XV Apollinaris

LXV

LXVA

XV

XVA

Further Identifying the Hoard

Having gained a general acquaintance with the sorts of usually rectangular countermarks that appear mostly on worn, light-weight and counterfeit ancient Roman coins, we can now try to pinpoint the geographical source of the hoard. The

traditional way to do this was to consult highly specialized references, but they can be very hard to locate. In fact, Howgego lists three of the countermarks—**AVG**, **TICA** and the helmet on shield—that appear in this group of coins, but he was uncertain where they were issued. He noted that previous writers had suggested Moesia, Thrace, Messembria, and the Rhineland as all being their source!

AVG and **IMP** were general, imperial titles, and do not help much in determining a location because versions of these countermarks were issued by so many legion camps. **TICA**, however, is relatively distinctive. It is one of the countermarks that was used by Claudius or indicates that a piece was authorized to circulate at a value equivalent to a particular issue of Claudius. Most notably it was used by the XIII Gemina in Germany.

Armed with the general information that has been presented in this article, a reader can now access the *Roman Numismatic Gallery* at <http://www.romancoins.info> and interpret its more technical information. That website has an extensive section called "The Museum of Countermarks on Roman Coins," which includes many specimens from the Richard Baker collection. Its opening photograph is a group of about one hundred countermarked Roman aes coins, which are even more worn than the pieces in this hoard. *They illustrate just how difficult it is to identify such coins even if one knows in advance of examining them that they are legion issues.*

While only the very best pieces are photographed on that website and in reference books, it often remains hard to interpret particular stamps. Nevertheless, there is a great advantage to the website. Pieces are listed by emperor and mint, which not only helps in identifying the original coin's date, but their countermarks as well, as do the notations about where various sorts of countermarked coins have been found.

By scanning the website you will discover that the sorts of countermarks which appear on the coins of this hoard were stamped in the Balkans. A number of similar style **AVG** and **TICA** stamps as those in the hoard are illustrated, including various crude **TICA** stamps that were counterfeited in ancient times as a way to increase the value of light-weight counterfeit coins. One of the illustrated coins also has an official **S** countermark, indicating its low weight and devaluation from an as to a semis.

More investigation indicates that the helmet in shield countermark which appears on some of the hoard coins has been found in Moesia (Bulgaria). In turn, this means the pieces are not from Germany, as was my initial hypothesis. Another useful piece of information is that the large countermark which appears on the reverse of many hoard coins is illustrated on the website, and it may be a dolphin. While that example also is so worn that it cannot be identified for certain, its association with these Balkan imitations confirms the geographical origins of these legion countermarks.



Examples of Hoard Specimens Highlighted to Better Show the Countermarks
 (Images are not actual size; for reference the coin at top right is 26 mm diameter.)



Moneyer Sestertius of Augustus
Countermarked **LAPRON** (LAP Conjoined)
from *Revue Archaeologique* 1878



As of Augustus Countermarked **TIB IMP** and **IMP AVG** from
Michael Grunwald's *Die Romischen Bronze und Kupfermunzen
mit Schlagmarken im Legionslager Vindonissa* (1946)



Drawings of Countermarks Reconstructed from Multiple Worn Coins from Colin
Kraay's *Die Munzfunde von Vindonissa* (1962).

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The author is happy to provide interested readers with a thirty-page bibliographical survey of the literature on ancient countermarked coins. He can be contacted at PO BOX 125, Hudson, IA 50643 (USA).



Coins for a Monk Named Joseph

Howard Ford NI #LM90

A fourteenth-century Byzantine monk named Joseph was one of the major Greek historians of his time. He composed a history of Byzantium for the period from about 1320 to about 1356, in which he wrote much about his own achievements in those years, and he did have a great many achievements. See internet link <http://education.yahoo.com/reference/encyclopedia/entry/John6Byz>. The mint at Constantinople struck some eighteen different types of coins in gold, silver, billon and bronze for this man—because from 1347 to 1354, before he adopted the name Joseph, he was known as John VI Cantacuzenus, ruler of the Byzantine Empire. He was overthrown in 1354 and banished to a monastery, where he began to write his famous history (David R. Sear, *Byzantine Coins and Their Values*. London: Seaby, 1974, p.400).



JOHN V Palaeologus, with JOHN VI Cantacuzenus. 1341-1391. Billon Tornese, 0.53g. Constantinople mint. Struck 1347-1353. Cross with triple pellet terminals, B B's with stars in quarters / DEC II, the emperors standing facing, holding scepters, and an akakia (roll of purple silk containing dust, representing man's mortality) between them. DOC V 1197; Bendall 293; SB 2533.

NI

Gold and Silver Coins in the Closing Days of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and Western Silver Coins: An Outflow of Gold Coins

Hideki Otsuka, Institute for Monetary and Economic Studies, Bank of Japan



Equivalent in weight

Tempo Ichibu-gin (1837)
 24mm × 16mm approx.
 Mass: 8.6g
 Fineness: 0.99
 Total mass for three coins:
 25.8g

Mexican Silver Dollar (1854)
 Diameter: 38mm
 Mass: 26.8g
 Fineness: 0.90
 Pure silver content: 24.1g

Equivalent in material value

Ansei Nishu-gin (1859)
 28mm × 17mm approx.
 Mass: 13.5g
 Fineness: 0.85
 Pure silver content
 for two coins: 23.0g



Tempo Koban (1837)
 60mm × 32mm approx.
 Mass: 11.3g
 Fineness: 0.57



Man'en Koban (1860)
 36mm × 20mm approx.
 Mass: 3.3g
 Fineness: 0.57

Toward the end of the Edo Period (1603-1867), the parity between gold and silver in Japan deviated significantly from the international parity as the value of silver appreciated. With the opening of Japanese ports to foreign trade, high-value silver coins came to be exchanged for Mexican silver dollars, which were low in material value but heavy in weight. A substantial amount of gold coins consequently drained out of the country as a result of arbitrage transactions (Mexican silver dollars into ichibu-gin [Japanese silver coins] into koban [Japanese gold coins] into Mexican silver dollars).

With the issue of Meiwa Nanryo *Nibu-gin* in 1772 marking a turning point, silver coins were gradually transformed from a currency measured by weight into a currency tally denominated in gold coins. Amid the progress of currency unification through gold coins, the Tokugawa Shogunate continued to mint new coins after the start of the 19th century, with silver coins of gold denomination accounting for the majority of silver coins by the mid-19th century. In the case of silver coins, while the pure silver content per one *ryo* of a silver coin was gradually debased, the actual silver value appreciated significantly; the gold/silver parity deviated greatly from the international standard (1:15), reaching 1:5, as the exchange value for silver coins of fixed weight was set in units of gold coins.

Such a deviation was the result of the shogunate's control of gold and silver and the policy of national isolation. With the end of isolationism and the opening of ports, however, the contradiction became evident, together with the possibility of an outflow of gold coins abroad. Despite stipulations by the shogunate that the exchange rate for gold and silver was to be computed based on the material value, the exchange rate between Western coins (mostly Mexican silver dollars) and silver coins (mainly the Tempo Ichibu-gin) was set at a rate of 100 pieces of one dollar silver coins to 311 pieces of ichibu-gin in accordance with the principle that two coins with the same weight were equivalent. Accordingly, as the parity between gold and silver in Japan at that time was merely one-third of the international party, it was possible to gain large profits at virtually no risk through arbitrage transactions. Namely, Western coins were brought into Japan and exchanged for ichibu-gin. These were then exchanged for gold coins (Tempo Koban) and taken abroad, where they were traded for gold bullion. The gold bullion was then exchanged for Western coins.

Fearing the outflow of gold coins abroad, the shogunate minted a new silver coin known as the Ansei Nishu-gin prior to the opening of Japan's ports in May 1859. The Ansei Nishu-gin was superior to the Tempo Ichibu-gin in terms of weight and fineness, but its worth was set at half the face value to bring its gold/silver parity in line with the international standard. Other countries strongly objected to the measure, however, and the shogunate was forced to terminate the coin's issue shortly after opening the ports.

In February 1860, as an emergency measure to stem the flow of gold coins abroad, the shogunate ordered a threefold increase in the exchange value of the Tempo Koban and the Ansei Koban against other silver coins. In April of the same year, moreover, the government decided to reduce by one-third the amount of pure gold content per one *ryo* of gold coin. This brought the gold/silver parity in line with that of other countries, putting an end to the problem. At the same time, however, the shogunate minted a massive amount of Man'en Nibu-kin gold coins of inferior quality and instituted a premium for its exchange with old coins. By the close of the period of Tokugawa rule, the massive increase of gold in domestic circulation had ignited a sharp rise in prices, negatively affecting the Japanese economy.

All images courtesy of Currency Museum, Institute for Monetary and Economic Studies, Bank of Japan.

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